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ABSTRACT

A study was done to gather data about the attitudes of members of the North American Field Education Directors Association in order to assist in developing clear organizational goals. The study proceeded in several ways. A survey instrument was developed and sent to 50 field education directors in the United States and Canada. Results were analyzed and data compiled using descriptive statistics. The results indicated the following conclusions: (1) field directors should be included in discussions when the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) develops accreditation standards for field education; (2) there should be ongoing representation of field education on CSWE committees; (3) greater emphasis on the teaching of ethics to social work practicum students is needed; (4) classroom theory should be more closely integrated with practice issues; and (5) more textbooks on field education should be developed. An overall recommendation emerged that there is a definite need to set prioritized goals for the North American Field Education Directors Association. Such goals would include a closer working relationship with the accrediting body. Included are 3 tables, appendixes containing copies of the transmittal letter and the questionnaire, and 15 references. (Author/JB)

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AN ASSESSMENT TO DEVELOP STRATEGIC GOALS FOR THE NORTH AMERICAN FIELD EDUCATION DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

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by

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HE 025 510

A Report to the North American Field Education Directors Steering Committee

Annual Program Meeting, Council on Social Work Education
Kansas City, MO.

March, 1992

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Abstract of a Report Presented to the North American Field Education Directors Network Entitled: AN ASSESSMENT TO DEVELOP STRATEGIC GOALS FOR THE NORTH AMERICAN FIELD EDUCATION DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

by

John J. Conklin

March, 1992

The purpose of this study was to gather data about the attitudes of members of the north american field education directors association. The nature of the problem which prompted this study was that clear organizational goals had not been set by the steering committee. Based upon the findings of this study, a strategic planning process can be initiated to identify standards, strengthen the organization, and improve educational outcomes in professional social work schools throughout the United States and Canada.

Several procedures were involved in this study. A survey instrument was developed which had seven general questions and three categorical questions. The instrument was validated by local and national experts in field education. It was sent to fifty field education directors in the United States and Canada whose names had been selected by the the national chairman of the directors association. Results were analyzed, data compiled using descriptive

statistics, and reported in both tabular and narrative formats.

The results, based on a ninety-two percent response rate, were used to reach these conclusions: (1) field directors should be included in discussions when the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) develops accreditation standards for field education, and (2) there should be ongoing representation on CSWE committees which relate to field education issues.

Several educational conclusions were also reached. The respondents strongly endorsed a greater emphasis on the teaching of ethics to social work practicum students, closer integration of classroom theory with practice issues, and the development of more textbooks on the area of field education.

The overall recommendation was that there is a definite need to set some prioritized goals for the north american field education directors association which would include a closer working relationship with the accrediting body. The survey results will be disseminated to the steering committee for initial discussion and a strategic plan will be developed at a forthcoming national conference.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance

A new organization known as the "North American Field Education Directors Association" represents approximately 450 undergraduate and graduate social work practicum programs throughout the United States and Canada. The purposes of the association are to identify higher education issues, set standards, and advocate for improvements in the practicum portion of social work education.

The nature of the problem is that to date, specific organizational goals for the association have not been identified by the steering committee. A study needed to be made to poll the membership about issues which would be part of a strategic planning process initiated by the steering committee. Educational goals needed to be identified clearly, so that strategies to accomplish those goals could be instituted.

In the past, important policy decisions were made about field education accreditation standards by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Any input which was sought from field directors usually was through conclusions from a temporary "technical assistance project" initiated around specific issues (Wayne, Skolnick and Raskin, 1989). Now,

there is a need to have an ongoing, formal dialogue with the accrediting body regarding educational issues which are related to the internship portion of undergraduate and graduate education as a group exists to perform this function, the field education directors association.

The purpose of this study was to gather specific data from the membership that would assist in the initiation of a strategic planning process which could result in the strengthening of the directors organization. The information about the educational goals identified by the membership is of major significance to the organization since studies of this new social work directors association have not been done, prior to this time.

A careful search of the literature through several bibliographic studies revealed that no other research studies have been done by the national field education directors association in the recent past. However, a number of other salient articles were identified in reference to strategic planning, the role of field education directors(Schneck, 1991) and surveys about practicum teaching. These are all located within the institutional context of higher education and offer a number of conceptual innovations for national and international changes which are taking place in social work education(Raskin, Skolnick, and Wayne, 1991).

All schools of social work are accredited by a central social work educational body, the CSWE. A substantial number

of governance and management issues are covered in those standards including the development of a governance document for each institution. Frequent reference is made to field education in the governance documents at the institutional level. However, in the past, the standards have been set nationally by a number of board members who were not directly involved with practicum training. The setting of accreditation standards needs to be strengthened by direct involvement of the national experts in field education.

Peterson (1989:133) suggests that changes may be made in any organization in the following manner:

> Targets for change are the organization's culture, management style, work structure, decision-making patterns, communication, interaction, and influence. The major planning issue is to understand the institution or group as a human system and to develop its capacity to plan as a means of improving individual, collective, and organizational well-being.

Within this context, changes can be made in the decision-making patterns, interaction and communication in the directors association following the discussion of the results from the survey which was conducted. Later, this material will be used in discussions with the governing body, the CSWE.

The major research question that concerns this practicum is as follows: Since clear organizational goals have not been set by the steering committee, what assessment process can be used to identify educational goals, and implement various structures and strategies to accomplish those goals? In this regard, the practicum is closely

related to the governance and management seminar, since the information obtained will help to form the basis on which strategic planning can be done by the steering committee of the field directors association.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A literature review was conducted to provide a conceptual framework for this study. "Social work field education," "internship training," and "strategic planning" were key words for database searches. Periodicals were obtained through the help of the Trecker Library staff. The literature review contained information on organizational, institutional, and curriculum issues. This provided information on the research data that was of greatest importance to collect. An initial literature review was used in preparation of the questionnaire used to gather data.

Concepts Regarding Practicum Education

The literature reviewed contained information about changes in social work field education administration and practicum training. Hawthorne and Holzman(1991:322) did a study in which they obtained current data on the role of practicum directors, which focused on: "(1) allocation of time and tasks; (2) kinds and degrees of satisfactions and dissatisfactions; (3) available and desired support systems; (4) patterns and predictions for the future of the position." Their pilot study was sent to eight west coast directors and nine east coast directors. The findings are related to this practicum in that they identified the need

for "desired support systems," and "predictions for the future of the position."

The national field directors association serves as a support group to individuals and regional groups. It also advocates for "future planning" in reference to the nature of field education in general and the roles of field directors.

Closely related to the advocacy of field education are two articles, one by Schneck(1991) and the other by Skolnick (1988) which review the background concepts to the present concerns of the directors. In "Ideal and Reality in Field Education," Schneck(1991:17) reviews the past in a literate fashion:

> The evolving and colorful mission of field education can be imagined as a mediating construct among the interacting forces and dynamics of social, educational and practice ideals and realities. The expressed goals of the apprenticeship, field work, field instruction or field education as it has been variously called over the last century reveal a core statement of the overall purpose of social work education as they seem portraits in time of cherished ideals cast against the backdrop of the realities of the day. As we struggle with our current realities in teaching and administering field programs, we necessarily act within our own particularistic spheres of influence, demands and resources, perhaps recalling our own experiences as a field student.

He goes on to detail the tensions which have existed between universities and agencies which attempted to teach "practical subjects" under applied philanthropy back in the 1890's. It was at that time when social work began to be taught as an academic subject in higher education settings.

Skolnick(1988) is a nationally-known field education researcher who completed two national surveys of BSW and MSW field education departments. Her findings recently appeared in print. Some of the common concerns of field educators Skolnick(1988:47) identified were:

> Findings indicated striking agreement between field educators and agency personnel about problematic areas: the integration of academic content and field experience; conflicting demands of job and field instruction responsibilities, needs for standards for the evaluation of students, training for new and experienced field instructors; communication between schools and agencies; and the qualification and needs of students. Both educators and practitioners identified standard-setting, ongoing training, and recognition of field education and field instructors as key problem-solving strategies.

Skolnick's initial findings appeared at about the same time that the field education directors association began some regular communication with members who were identified as national leaders. One of those leaders is Raskin(1989:29) who edited a text entitled: Empirical Studies in Field Instruction. In one of the chapters, she reported the use of the Delphi technique to conduct a national study on field instruction. One of her key research questions was: "How does planning for field instruction fit into the overall educational and curriculum planning process?"

Within the context of social work education, there is, of necessity, much discussion about what to do for the profession in the midst of rapidly changing societal forces such as homelessness, the situation regarding people with AIDS, economic recession and world change.

There is some ambiguity about where the profession is heading. Continuous planning for the profession will be needed in the future to accommodate to rapid social and educational changes.

Glazer(1986:73) states:

> The diversification of the work force has been linked to confusion about the meaning of the M.S.W. New criteria for the rapid entry of B.S.W.'s , outside pressures from human service occupations, and the elimination of Title XX and various public programs have created competition between B.S.W.'s and M.S.W.'s and confusion about their respective skills and roles.

On the other side of the ledger, Magner(1989) writes that in spite of the role confusion, a renewed interest in the profession of social work has been noted. Causal factors are that older students are enrolling in graduate school, others are changing career fields, there is increased legal regulation of social workers as providers of third-party services, and more graduates are accepting employment in private sector jobs.

Several years after the publication of Raskin's text, a new book edited by three co-chairs of the field education steering committee appeared. The book contained over thirty articles on field education issues which were taken from papers given by various authors at national symposia on field education. These were conducted during annual program meetings of the Council on Social Work Education. Over the years, the symposia gained in popularity and contributed to the establishment of a steering committee.

The book is divided into four parts: "Conceptual Foundations for Field Education," "Field Education Models," "Field Instruction Roles and Processes," and "Educational Issues." Under "Conceptual Models for Field Instruction," the editors, Schneck, Grossman and Glassman(1991:13-15) define these as:

> The first area concerns the constituent actors, common elements, and organizations--their interaction and political economy. These would necessarily include faculty, field directors, and field staff from schools; field instructors and educational coordinators within the agencies; the affiliational structures and relationship; field students, including their interests, past experiences and talent, and the complex of larger organizations such as CSWE, NASW, and state and federal social agencies which influence and shape field education....The second area of conceptual foundations considers the educational philosophy and value attributed to experiential learning in social work education....The third area analyzes the cognitive process of learning and the integration of theoretical knowledge and concepts with professional decision-making and intervention....The final conceptual foundation area deals with...the content or curriculum of field education.

In reference to field education planning for the future, international interest is beginning to develop in the field education directors association. This is reflected in the fact that a new name for the association as been proposed: The North American Field Educators and Directors Network. This "network" is now composed of American and Canadian schools. However, there has also been some discussion about inviting other international schools who have established internship programs. The literature suggests there are social work programs in fifty-one other countries(Raskin, Skolnick, and Wayne, 1991:258).

The need for future planning was underscored by the same authors in their study entitled: "An International Perspective on Field Instruction." In that article, they present findings from a study of 400 international schools who are members of the International Association of Schools of Social Work. The authors(1991:269) note:

> Despite important structural and demographic differences in social work education programs, there are functional commonalities in field education and notable areas of mutual concern and interest. However, effective communication and collaboration can only occur with an understanding of the varied frames of reference that would be brought into an international educational forum....Shared problem-solving should be encouraged--everyone stands to gain from new perspectives on long-standing problems.

Concepts Regarding Strategic Planning

All of the above seems to suggest that planning is a specific "must" if change will be greeted and adaptations made to it in educational forums on both a national and international basis. It is against this backdrop that materials were sought through database searches to identify strategic planning articles that would be related to work of the field education directors association.

To begin, "strategic planning" is defined by Austin, Groff, and Scigliano(1988:91):

> The new technology of strategic planning calls for (1) an assessment of an institution's external environment and (2) an audit of an institution's internal environment as a prelude to creating images, visions, and scenarios of the future. An institution can then decide on strategic options and tactical alternatives.

The institution in this case is the north american field educators association which can conduct both internal

and external studies as a part of the strategic planning process. The directors and the steering committee of the organization can conduct develop planning goals for the future of practicum education.

The ideas suggested by recent writers, such as Parnell(1990) in his book Dateline 2000: The New Higher Education Agenda, indicate that there are a number of positive "opportunities and challenges" ahead. Some will be shaped by demographic changes as the world interacts as a "global community." These are also some of the issues faced by the field education directors in reference to the strategic planning opportunities.

Groff(1988:9), a strategic planner, is also a futurist thinker in his writing. In one article, he suggests:

> Between now and the 21st century, education will face challenges as profound as those that caused the invention of schools, the creation of colleges, the transformation of nineteenth century small colleges into universities, the evolution of land-grant universities, and the spread of two-year colleges....Professional educators must redesign and restructure the education and training industry. Professional educators must design new information age paradigms for an advanced technical society. Strategic thinking is one tool to help reach that long term goal.

In a similar vein, Groff(1987:17) makes a comment that is related to the social work educational profession:

> Some persons in the current workforce were trained as service providers and then made a career change to education and expected to be able to teach their specialty to students in quality career programs.

That comment fits most social work educators who were initially trained as practitioners. Groff(1987:18) suggests that effective leaders need additional qualities:

> Leaders are persons who dream about issues like access or equality of opportunity; achieving and maintaining excellence; and strengthening the arts, humanities, and science. They dream in order to envision an agenda for individual and institutional development.

Thus, there is a conceptual inference that if strategic planning is an effective approach for designing new approaches to challenges which will face educational institutions, the field directors group will need to face the new global challenges with a positive leadership agenda. Groff(1989) gives emphasis to a set of "values." This is related to questions in the survey relating to courses which were oriented toward the teaching of "professional ethics."

Still a third article by the same author is entitled: "Toward the 21st Century: Preparing Strategic Thinkers in Vocational, Technical, and Occupational Education." In part, Groff(1989:17) comments on the preparation of proactive leaders "who can think strategically about transforming contemporary traditional establishments into ones appropriate or an advanced technological era."

Social work field education is affected directly by the practice issues of the times which continue to change. Social work field education directors are moved by the need to work between the curriculum of the school and the needs of the practicum sites as they experience changes in the client population served by social agencies. More strategic

planning needs to be done in order to anticipate some of the changes which are coming. These are the "critical role dilemmas" which field education directors face, mentioned earlier in the work cited by Hawthorne and Holzman(1988).

Morrison(1990) is another writer who advocates the use of futures research, as does Groff, in doing college and university planning. Through the use of both external and internal analyses to produce a vision of alternative future environments, strategic long-range planning can be done. In this case, "institutional research" is done to create policies which will be compatible with future environments as they develop.

Finally, Peterson(1989:141) conceptualizes strategic planning under four categories:

1. environmental assessment or scanning (to identify trends or potential changes in the environment and their implications for the institution.
2. institutional assessment (to clarify strengths, weaknesses, problems, and capabilities of the institution)
3. values assessment (to consider values, aspirations, and ideals of various constituencies and responsibilities of the institution to then and the larger public; and
4. master plan creation (to devise a strategic pattern, design, or direction for the institution on the basis of the first three elements)

Strategic planning can be used for social work field education issues. Visionary thinking and alternative scenario building can be done. The nature of practicum education relates directly to these issues.

In summary, a number of major concepts about strategic planning were identified. A new technology exists for

assessing the internal and external environments of institutions. Between now and the 21st century there will be new challenges and new opportunities to those institutions which will require redesign and restructuring of the educational industry. Proactive leaders are needed who can envision future change and create it. The field education leadership will need to create a "master plan" to accommodate to the rapid demographic changes which are already taking place in the "global community."

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The basic research question to be answered was: What is the essential data needed to be used in the development of a strategic planning process for the national field educators association? Secondary questions are related to future directions that field education, in general, should take given rapidly changing demographic factors, technological advances and a constantly shifting economic scene.

Several specific procedures were used to conduct this evaluative practicum. First, an extensive literature review was conducted to develop a conceptual and practice base for the current functions of field education in social work. Also, special attention was given to articles and additional materials on the subject of strategic planning in academic settings.

A transmittal letter explaining the purpose of the survey (see Appendix A) and a questionnaire were developed (see Appendix B). These were reviewed by several local and national field education experts to insure that a valid and reliable instrument was developed for data collection.

As a result of this review, under general question three, several specific questions were treated as separate curriculum questions. These concerned the topics of AIDS,

homelessness, violence and substance abuse. Originally, they were included together under a single question regarding: "modern clinical dilemmas such as AIDS, homelessness, violence and substance abuse." By separating them into specific responses, comparative percentages were able to be obtained on each subject separately.

Similarly, the responses under question four, regarding "institutional improvement," about the status of field education and field education directors as faculty-administrators were reframed to offer one open-ended and five closed-ended questions. Originally, there were only three sub-parts to this question instead of the six which appeared in the final questionnaire.

The final validation of the questionnaire was done over the telephone with the national chairman of the field education directors association. To announce the survey, the national chairman sent a letter to the entire membership announcing that a study would be done with a sample of the membership so as to gather data as a basis for strategic planning. The sample was selected by the chairman.

The transmittal letter, questionnaire and a stamped return envelope were sent to a sample of fifty members of the national field directors association. Names of the individuals who were sent the questionnaire were recorded and a numerical coding system was developed.

A second letter and questionnaire were sent two weeks later to insure a high response rate. The final result of a

ninety-two percent response rate allowed for maximum generalizations to be made based upon the data.

The data was analyzed and compiled using descriptive statistics. The results were reported in both tabular and narrative form.

Following tabulation of the data, the findings were reported to the national chairman. A final written report will be sent to the steering committee prior to the next annual meeting in the spring. On the basis of the data, strategic planning can be done.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this practicum report, specific terms need to be defined. "Field education," " field practicum," "internship" refers to that portion of a graduate or undergraduate social work program which is similar to apprenticeship training. Students are required to work in a social agency concurrent with classroom study. They are supervised by "field instructors," or "practicum instructors" who provide educational supervision. "Field education director" or "practicum director" refers to an educational administrator in academic social work programs.

"North American Field Education Directors Association," "field directors group," and "field directors organization," are general terms which refer to the committee of the whole. The members are a group of approximately 450 directors of field education in the United States and Canada.

"Steering committee" is a specific term which refers to three co-chairs and eleven other members who were selected from the membership. They serve as the board for the north american field education directors association. They propose policies to the membership plus do the organizational work for the annual field education symposia at the annual program meeting of the Council on Social Work Education.

Assumptions

A set of assumptions was made about this study. One assumption was that the data would be of benefit to the field directors association. Another assumption was that the participants who completed the questionnaire were interested enough to provide honest answers to the survey instrument. A third assumption was that the responses to the questions were valid. Every attempt was made to avoid bias in the wording of the questionnaire.

Limitations

There were several limitations inherent in this evaluative study. All of the subjects of the study are administrators in their institutions who are responsible for the placement of all social work students in practicum placements. The questionnaire was sent at the beginning of the academic year at a busy time. In light of these pressures, the questionnaire was designed to be easily answered using three possible responses on a Likert scale instead of five.

Another limitation is that the questionnaire is specific to this organization and this profession. While it is applicable to other practice-based educational programs, it was primarily designed for an association composed of social work field education administrators.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The literature review was organized and completed around two interrelated sets of concepts: (1) field education philosophies and practices for social work education, and (2) strategic planning in higher education related to governance and planning. The survey instrument was created based upon the literature review and discussions with field education colleagues.

The survey instrument, accompanied by the transmittal letter, was mailed to fifty field education directors in the United States and Canada in higher education programs. Of the fifty directors, forty-six responded providing a response rate of ninety-two percent.

On follow-up activities, the collected data was compiled and analyzed. The survey instrument was divided into three major sections: (1) general questions concerning the direction that the "organization," meaning the field education directors association should take; (2) a section concerning some of the responses to questions relating to specific "institutional" areas of concern at individual social work institutions, and (3) responses to questions about curriculum areas relating to social work practice and current practicum issues.

The responses to several questions regarding the field education organizational questions will be presented in tabular format. In each table, there is the number and percentage of respondents who answered each question with designations of "I" for important, "S" for somewhat important, and "U" for unimportant. The total number of respondents to the survey was forty-six. In cases where the total number of responses were less that, it was due to the fact that specific questions were left unanswered. Percentages were calculated based upon the whole number of responses to each question to avoid fractions. The findings have not yet been discussed.

The first table gives information on some major questions related to the field education directors association. The questions concern information which can be used by the steering committee to set some strategic planning goals for the association.

The first question is: "Do you think that field directors should be included in discussions when the CSWE develops accreditation standards for field education?" In this case, forty-four of forty-five respondents answered that they believed this to be an important issue. This was a ninety-eight per cent response rate. This question received the highest score in the organizational section of the questionnaire.

Under the general set of questions about organizational issues, a specific question was: "Do you think that one of

the most important agendas items at the national level for the field directors association is to obtain representation on CSWE committees?" Of the answers to this question, thirty-eight, or eighty-four per cent, answered that this was an important issue. This was the second-ranked question in terms of responses.

The third organizational question was: "Should further publications similar to the book Field Education in Social Work be produced in the future?" In this case, thirty-eight respondents, or eighty-three per cent, felt this was an important issue.

The fourth highest response was to the question: "Do you believe there is a need to set prioritized goals for the North American Field Education Directors Association?" Thirty-five people, or eighty per cent of the sample indicated that this was important. Also, nine respondents, or twenty per cent of the subjects who answered this question indicated that this was somewhat important.

The fifth question in rank order raised the question as to the desirability of having regional conferences as additional training opportunities throughout the year. The question which concerned this practice was: "What is your opinion of having regional conferences for field educators?" Thirty-four of the individuals who answered this question thought it to be important. That answer represented a sixty-seven per cent response rate to the question. The table which provides the findings follows.

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Responses
to Organizational Questions

Topic	Important		Somewhat Important		Unimportant	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Accreditation Standards input	44	98	1	2	0	0
2. Field Education representation on CSWE committee	38	84	6	14	0	0
3. More publications	38	83	8	17	0	0
4. Prioritized goals	35	80	9	20	0	0
5. Sponsor more regional conferences	34	74	8	17	0	0

Table 2 refers to several questions which are related to "institutional issues." These concern specific issues which are of interest to practicum directors at their own universities regarding future goals.

The table contains data which permits topics based on the number of important responses to be ranked from first to fourth place. The first question concerns how important the respondents consider the "integration of theory and practice in field settings" to be at their institutions. Eighty-five per cent indicated this was important, while fifteen per cent felt it to be somewhat important.

A second question considered how important the directors felt "training for field instructors" at local

institutions was. Eighty per cent felt it to be important while twenty per cent felt it to be somewhat important.

Similarly, a question considering the significance of "agency-school collaboration" was answered as important by eighty per cent of the respondents and somewhat important by seventeen per cent of those who answered. Only one individual thought this to be unimportant.

A fourth question regarding the importance of the "changing models of field instruction" was answered by seventy-two per cent of the population. The remaining twenty-eight per cent answered that this was a somewhat important issue. The table follows.

Table 2

Number and Percentages of Responses to Institutional Questions

	Important		Somewhat Important		Unimportant	
Topic	No.	%	No.	%	N.	%
1. Integration of theory/practice in field settings	39	85	7	15	0	0
2. Training of field instructors	36	80	9	20	0	0
3. Agency-school Collaboration	37	80	8	17	1	3
4. Changing models of field instruction	33	72	13	28	0	0

The third table illustrates a number of answers which were given to a group of questions which sought information about what curriculum topics were of the greatest importance to consider in terms of practicum education. A number of practice topics were suggested which the respondents ranked in order of preference.

In the first instance, a question on "ethics" was scored as important by forty individuals. This represents ninety-three per cent of the responses. The additional seven per cent of the population answered that this was somewhat important.

The second ranked question concerned the respondents opinions about whether or not to teach issues concerning "violence" to practicum students. Thirty-two respondents, or seventy-three per cent, answered that this topic was important. The remaining twenty-seven per cent answered that this was somewhat important.

The third curriculum area concerned the teaching of information about "substance abuse." Again, thirty-two individuals, or seventy-one per cent, answered that this was an important area. An additional twenty-nine per cent of the respondents answered that this was a somewhat important area to be considered as a practice issue.

The fourth question concerned the "changing nature of social work practice." Twenty-eight individuals or sixty-four per cent of the respondents rated this as an important issue to be considered. Thirty-four per cent considered this

to be somewhat important, and one individual thought it to be an unimportant area to consider.

The fifth and sixth curriculum areas concerned "AIDS" and "homelessness." The response rate to both questions was identical. Each question was answered as being important by twenty-six individuals or fifty-nine per cent of the sample. Similarly, forty-one per cent of the responses to both questions were that these were somewhat important issues.

Table 3

Curriculum Issues

Topic	Important		Somewhat Important		Unimportant	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Ethics	40	93	3	7	0	0
2. Violence	32	73	12	27	0	0
3. Substance abuse	32	71	13	29	0	0
4. Changing nature of Social Work practice	28	64	15	34	1	2
5. AIDS	26	59	17	41	0	0
6. Homelessness	26	59	17	41	0	0

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The results of the practicum were related to the purpose which was to gather data to assist in the development of a strategic planning process for the national field education directors association. The responses to key questions on a survey provided information necessary for the setting of goals. Data was obtained from several questions about issues related to the organization, accreditation, and the need for strategic planning. Another set of questions provided specific information about institutional goals at the university level. A third set of questions provided specific information about curriculum issues, and field education.

For this practicum, the literature review was of value because it identified the fact that research concerning field education has increased. Ten years ago, there was less research being done on social work field education. In the past several years, the frequency of related articles has increased. The articles also have been written about a greater variety of topics and include research reports about national and international social work field education.

Second, the literature review was of value because it contained information about some of the organizational patterns which affect the status of the profession. There are specific articles in the literature about the nature of the accreditation process and how it affects social work education. This information relates directly to the concerns of the field education directors committee.

Third, the literature was related the study of field education issues on a regional and institutional basis. Similarities and differences were noted according to various regions in the practicum programs offered in various parts of the United States and Canada.

The literature corroborated the fact that practice issues change rapidly in the profession of social work. It was important to review the literature to identify what some of the present curriculum issues are related to those changes. From the literature review, specific questions were created for the survey instrument.

Through the surveying of fifty field education administrators in the United States and Canada, specific data was obtained which identified organizational, institutional, and curriculum goals. The conclusions, implications and recommendations derived from the assessment results are restricted by the assumptions and limitations listed earlier in the practicum report.

The general discussion of the results from the questionnaire is that three-fourths of the respondents

indicated that the organization should have much more input into the writing of accreditation standards, and field education representation on CSWE committees. More publications should be produced by the organization. Also, the respondents favored the setting of prioritized goals for the field education directors committee.

More than seventy-five per cent of the respondents indicated that the integration of theory and practice in field settings was important. The training of field instructors, and agency-school collaboration were also thought to be important issues.

In the curriculum area, the highest number of responses was in reference to the teaching of professional ethics. The next closest percentages concerned the need to teach courses to field instructors regarding issues related to violence, and substance abuse.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, a strategic planning process can be initiated to identify additional strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities for the north american field education directors association. The members polled indicated their interest by answering the survey instrument with a high response rate. Specific information was obtained in reference to field education standards and the need for participation in suggesting changes to the CSWE.

A strategic planning process can be of assistance to the organization in setting clear goals for the next five years. Additional publications can be written which will be of assistance to practicum instructors as have other texts which were identified in the literature search.

Educational outcomes can be improved in the United States and Canada through the preparation of written documents, training and additional emphasis upon the latest practice issues. This material can be developed at national conferences and regional conferences. The national field education directors association can initiate many of these suggestions.

Implications

Several implications have become apparent after review of the conclusions drawn in response to the three sets of general questions. First, a large percentage of the directors supported a number of specific organizational functions that can be performed by the steering committee and chairs of the field education directors association. These include, but are not limited to, the establishment of closer ties with the Council on Social Work Education. The respondents supported both offering input as well as seeking membership on those committees that are most closely related to social work practice issues.

The publication of the book entitled: Field Education in Social Work: Contemporary Issues(Schneck, Grossman, and Glassman, 1991), led respondents to favor the development of

additional materials. These could provide additional information to the membership about educational topics which are closely related to their educational and administrative functions at the institutional level.

There was significant support for the setting of prioritized goals. The idea of "priorities" and "goals" is directly related to the functions of strategic planning in the literature in which references are made to "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats," as outlined by authors like Groff(1988). The implication of providing a structured technological approach to the development of the new organization would provide some specific directions, set clear goals, and assist with continuity.

A number of implications followed the conclusions established in the second group of questions regarding institutional changes at the university level as suggested by the data. Eighty-five percent of the respondents favored the integration of theory and practice in field settings. Almost the same number indicated that more training programs should be developed for field instructors. Also, more regional conferences should be instituted.

One of the conclusions was that closer relationships should be developed between the agencies and the schools of social work. The implication of this is related to the importance of field education to the respondents. In a question relating to institutional issues, the query was posed as to the "importance" of field education. Seventy-

six per cent indicated this was important and twenty-one per cent indicated that it was somewhat important.

This is the type of question that implies a great deal and should be studied more thoroughly. As a status question, it raises the same issues as do some other questions on the role of the field director as an educational administrator.

Under the third category regarding the practice and curriculum issues which should be emphasized, the top issues suggested by the data concerned ethics, violence and substance abuse. Other related issues could be explored in follow-up studies concerning the changing nature of social work practice, plus the implications of AIDS, and homelessness. These are some of the major concerns of the profession as indicated in recent journal articles which were reviewed in the literature search. They are consistent with the findings of this survey.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made as a direct result of this practicum:

1. It is recommended that the steering committee of the north american field education directors association should seek direct input into the development of accreditation standards regarding field education which are set by the Council on Social Work Education. Representation on committees of the Council which are most concerned with field education issues should be sought.

2. It is recommended that priorities be set and a strategic action plan be developed for the field directors association. This would involve:

    a. initial discussion by the co-chairs of the steering committee after reviewing these findings;

    b. additional discussion with the entire steering committee;

    c. discussion with the membership at the next national meeting;

3. It is further recommended that the steering committee continue to work on institutional and curriculum improvement issues regarding field education. This would include:

    a. additional texts on topics related to field education and social work education, field instructor training, theory/practice integration, and a field education curriculum.

    b. the development of new models of field education to accommodate to the changing practice issues which concern topics such as: ethics, violence, substance abuse, AIDS and similar topics at national and regional conferences.

    c. Special practicum materials using new technology. This could include the

production of lectures and seminars on field education, professional publications and regional conference results serving as a basis for texts; videotapes for teaching about field practicum topics using telecommunications.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

School of Social Work
Greater Hartford Campus
1798 Asylum Avenue
West Hartford, Connecticut 06117-2698
(203) 241-4737

September 2, 1991

Dear Colleague in Field Education

In May, before the end of the academic year, you received an announcement from Dean Schneck that I would be contacting you regarding a survey of Directors Association that I will be conducting. A brief questionnaire has been developed which will begin to provide us with some specific data. This format will provide us with content which will be used to initiate some strategic planning for the future of the organization.

Specifically, the enclosed questionnaire was developed as part of a practicum project associated with doctoral studies at the Nova University Programs in Higher Education. You will note that many of the questions are closely related to recent discussions at the national level regarding issues concerning Field Education. Due to your active participation in the "North American Field Education Directors Committee," you were selected as one of a fifty member sample. As with all surveys of this type, individual responses will be coded to guarantee anonymity.

Please assist in the development of data by completing the enclosed survey and returning it to me by September 20, 1991. For those of you who have engaged in this type of process before, I do not need to tell you how important your individual participation is to the success of the project.

The completed questionnaire should be returned to me at my home address, 217 Ridge Road, Middletown, CT., 06457. A self-addressed stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Thank you for your assistance in this survey.

Sincerely yours,

John J. Conklin, ACSW, CISW
Associate Professor
Director of Field Education

An Equal Opportunity Employer

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey to Assist in the Development of Strategic Goals for the North American Field Education Directors Committee

CODE #_____

Please circle one response per item.
I= important S= somewhat important U= unimportant

1. Do you believe there is a need to set some prioritized goals for the North American Field Education Directors Committee? I S U

2. In the area of Educational-Instructional issues, how important do you consider the following items to be?

   a. Changing models of field education I S U
   b. Agency-School collaboration I S U
   c. Training of Field Instructors I S U
   d. Perquisites for Field Instructors, rewards, status I S U
   e. The integration of theory and practice in field settings I S U
   f. The impaired student I S U
   g. The impaired field instructor I S U
   h. Other_____

3. Following are a list of content topics regarding issues students might confront in their practicum might confront. How important do you consider the topics to be as intructional topics?

   a. AIDS I S U
   b. Homelessness I S U
   c. Violence I S U
   d. Substance Abuse I S U
   e. Safety I S U
   f. Shrinking agency resources I S U
   g. The changing nature of social work practice I S U
   h. Demographic changes I S U
   i. Budget constraints I S U
   j. Ethics, values I S U
   k. Other_____

In the area of Institutional Improvement, please indicate the importance of the following issues:

a. The status of Field Education in your school — I S U
b. The status of the Field Education Director in your school — I S U
c. Should Field Education Directors be full-time administrators? — I S U
d. Should Field Education Directors be full-time Faculty members? — I S U
e. Should Field Education Directors be part-time administrators as as well as part-time Faculty? — I S U
f. Other_____

5. Do you think that one of the most important agendas at the national level for the Field Directors Association is to obtain Field Education representation on CSWE committees? — I S U

6. Do you think that Field Directors should be included in discussions when the CSWE develops Accreditation Standards for Field Education? — I S U

7. What is your opinion of having regional conferences for field educators? — I S U

8. What is your opinion about establishing a National Clearinghouse on Field Education? — I S U

9. Should further publications similar to Field Education in Social Work be produced in the future? — I S U

10. Further comments: _____

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